1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

571 and the maker of it always belong to the same local community
463 and conduct the affair between themselves, there being no exchange of objects or services through the medium of a third person, and there is always between them a general social relationship of one kind or another, and their economic relations, if such they may be called, must conform to this general pattern of
571 behaviour. (3) There is little inequality of wealth and no class
565 privilege. A man does not acquire more objects than he can use. Were he to do so he could only dispose of them by giving them
• [578] away. It is true that cattle can be amassed, but, except for a few sacred herds kept by prophets, in fact they are not. As has been explained, periodic rinderpest levels the herds and, apart from this, when a herd has reached a certain size the owner—if one may speak of an owner of a herd in which many people have rights of one kind and another—is morally bound to dispose of a portion of it by either himself marrying or by assisting a relative to do so. Cattle are sometimes loaned to persons and the owner is entitled to receive back better beasts than those he lent, e.g. a heifer for the loan of an ox; but people only lend cattle to those with whom
571 they have an established social relationship. (4) In a narrow sense
476 the simple family might be called the economic unit, but we have seen that it is not self-sufficient and the active participation of a wider group is often necessary, e.g. in building, fishing, and hunting. It is also clear that a single family cannot herd its cattle in distant pastures and, at the same time, herd the calves elsewhere, attend to the tiny calves in the kraal, milk, churn, clean the kraal, prepare dung for fuel, cook the food, and so on, by itself. Co-operation is found among neighbours who are also kinsmen. There is also much mutual assistance when co-operation is not essential to the performance of a task, e.g. in weeding and harvesting, for it is conventional to ask people for help, the obligation to assist being part of a general kinship relationship. (5) It must be recognized also that fishing, hunting, herding, and the other activities I have described are always, in a sense, collective actions, for even when there is no active co-operation the whole community passively participates in them. A single man may drive a herd to pasture, a single boy may fish in river shallows, and a single woman may cook, but they can only do these things because they belong to a community and because their actions are related in a productive system. Tradition dictates ends and means and the organization and potential strength of the community gives the co-ordination and security necessary for accomplishment. It has been remarked that seen from the outside a whole village community may be said to be consuming a common stock of food.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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cide. By living with the chief as his guest from the moment his arm has been cut till the final settlement, the slayer has asylum, for the chief is sacred and blood must not be shed in his homestead. It is possible that men only take refuge with a chief when the danger of vengeance is very great, but it seems to be the general practice.

While the slayer is at the chief's home the avengers keep watch on him (*bim*) from time to time to see if he leaves his sanctuary and gives them a chance to spear him. They take any opportunity that offers to kill him, but they are not very persistent in seeking an opportunity. This state of affairs may go on for some weeks before the chief opens negotiations for settlement with the dead man's people, for his overtures are not likely to meet with a favourable response till the mortuary ceremony has been held and tempers have cooled a little. The negotiations are leisurely conducted. The chief first finds out what cattle the slayer's people (*jithunga*) possess and that they are prepared to pay compensation. I do not think that it would often happen that they would refuse to pay blood-cattle, unless they lived very far from the avengers or there were a number of unsettled feuds between the sections concerned, though they might not have the intention of handing them all over. He then visits the dead man's people (*jiran*) and asks them to accept cattle for the life. They usually refuse, for it is a point of honour to be obstinate, but their refusal does not mean that they are unwilling to accept compensation. The chief knows this and insists on their acceptance, even threatening to curse them if they do not give way, and his exhortations are supported by the advice of distant paternal kinsmen and cognatic relatives who will not receive any of the cattle and need not, therefore, show such pride and stubbornness, but who have a right to make their opinion known in virtue of their relationship to the dead man. The voice of compromise is also supported by the bias of custom. Nevertheless, the close kinsmen must refuse to listen to it till the chief has reached the limit of his arguments, and when they give way they declare that they are accepting the cattle only in order to honour him and not because they are ready to take cattle for the life of their dead kinsman.

In theory forty to fifty head of cattle are paid, but it is

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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possessed, even if a generation or two later, and the chosen vessel generally becomes aware of its entry by experiencing severe sickness with delirium. Ordinary Nuer, particularly if they are young, do not want to be possessed, and it seems that it is often an abnormal person who is possessed in the first place, while it is the most ambitious of his sons on whom his mantle falls, for he would seem to welcome possession, although not undergoing fasts to procure it. Gwek was killed by Government forces in 1928. Another famous prophet, Diu or Dengleaka, of the Gaawar tribe, was a captured Dinka who set about to acquire a spirit by fasting and solitude. He later achieved fame and power by successful campaigns against the Dinka, whose country his followers occupied, and against Arab slavers. Like Ngundeng he had a reputation for performing miracles. Dengleaka died in 1908 and his son Dwal became possessed with the spirit of the Sky-god, Diu. He is at present a political prisoner. The only prophet I have met, Buom, of Dok country, was possessed by the spirit of a Sky-god, Teeny. He was regarded as selfish and greedy by his neighbours, having been cunning enough to get himself accepted as a Government chief. He showed too great ambition, however, and is now in exile. Well-known prophets, in other parts of Nuerland, were Mut of the Eastern Gaajak, Kulang in Western Nuerland, and others.

Brief reference must be made to the very remarkable pyramid erected by Ngundeng, and added to by Gwek, in the Rumjok section of the Lou tribe. It was fifty to sixty feet high with large elephant tusks planted round the base and at the summit. Dr. Crispin's photograph on Plate XXV, taken in 1901, shows the palisade of ivory tusks, the type of material of which it was constructed, and weathering [illegible]. It was blown up by Government forces in 1928. The material used in construction consisted of ashes, earth, and debris excavated from sites of cattle camps. People came from all over Lou and the Eastern Jikany tribes, bringing oxen with them for sacrifice, to assist in the building. Nuer say that it was built in honour of the Sky-god Deng and for the glory of his prophet Ngundeng. There is no doubt that the cult of Deng was of Dinka origin and probably the idea of a mound came from the same source. Besides the famous Lou pyramid there is said to be a smaller one at Thoc in Eastern Jikany country, built by a prophet called Deng, son of Dul.

Nuer are unanimous in stating that these prophets are a recent development. They say that Deng descended from the sky in recent times—within living memory, in fact—and that he was the first, or almost the first, of the Sky-gods to come to

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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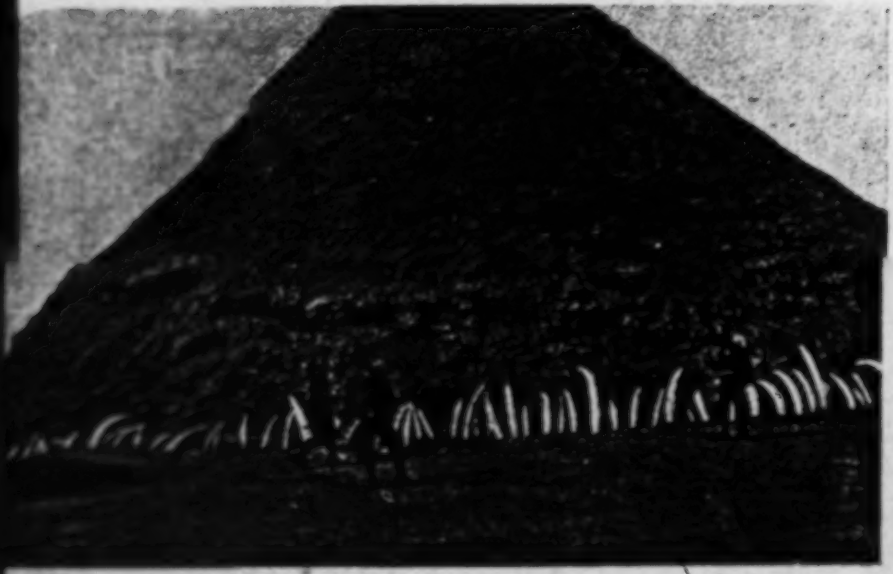
PLATE XXV

778 ●

a. Ngundeng's pyramid (Lou)



b. Ngundeng's pyramid (Lou)

[Face p. 228]

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

otherwise have been the case, because the side opposed to the youths who had rashly crossed the line were so incensed that they found a way of renewing the fight next day in another part of the area, well removed from the place in which the line had been drawn, and in greater force than before.

In most cases, however, the Leopard-Skin Chief only exerts his influence when he knows that the contestants wish him to do so. He will use threats to break down the opposition and expression of hatred demanded by convention rather than intervene on his own initiative when there exists a real determination to fight. Essentially, so far as the law is concerned, the Leopard-Skin Chief is the mediator who conducts the opposed groups peacefully through the elaborate processes of settlement, who acts as assessor where cattle are concerned, and who deals with the problems of taboo and spiritual observance which arise. He is the appointed and traditional 'Third Party', theoretically impartial, whose duty it is to smooth the path of the negotiations for both sides in a situation which is potentially dangerous. In some parts of Nuerland a special functionary, the *kuaar thoan*,[1] exists to mediate in disputes between two opposing Leopard-Skin families. In Eastern Nuer areas this function must be performed by a commoner or *dwek*.

2. BLOOD-FEUDS

The Process of Settlement and the Functions of the Leopard-Skin Chief as Mediator

The Leopard-Skin Chief concerned with the Individual

Apart from his duties in the settlement of feuds, the Leopard-Skin Chief is concerned with the spiritual welfare of a killer as an individual. The Leopard-Skin Chief's home is sanctuary and the group who seek vengeance may not enter, though they may lie in wait outside. As a mark of the sanctity and neutrality inherent in the office of Leopard-Skin Chief it is traditional that no spears may be carried into his presence or brought into his home.

A man who has killed another may not eat or drink until his blood has been let by a Leopard-Skin Chief; *ce riem-de kam rar* ('his blood has been taken out'). This ceremony is known as *birr*, and is performed by the Leopard-Skin Chief himself or one of his relatives. A fish-spear is taken and the arm of the killer scratched therewith until blood flows. The killer may not shave his head, and his home and cattle-byre are closed. His family may seek refuge with the Leopard-Skin Chief or may rely on the safety of numbers and group themselves round other relatives.

At this ceremony a bull-calf, known as *ruath birr*, is sacrificed by

[1] Thoan, serval cat (*Felis serval*).

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Chapter Seven

SOME NOTES ON RELIGION, SUPERSTITIONS, AND MORAL LAW

NUER GODS

776 THE Nuer has long feared and worshipped he knows not what. There are various gods, Deng, Wiu, Cwol, and others. Some have power over rain, some over crops, disease, death, or lightning.

778 825 Some animals are considered sacred, but what is sacred to one man is not necessarily held sacred by another. It may be the crocodile, or the land crocodile, or a certain kind of snake. Every Nuer is certain to have a sacred animal which he will neither kill nor eat.

782 Sheep and cattle are sacrificed on various grounds in order to appease one god or another.

[776] 766 When a person is struck by lightning and killed he is said to have been taken by the god of lightning—Cwol. His body is laid upon a rack that is made in his house or barn and then covered entirely—over, under, and on all sides—with wood, ash, and soil. The door of the house is closed and the house is left desolate except for its silent owner. A person who has been struck and killed by lightning is never buried in the ground as others are.

784 No one will touch a person who has been stunned by lightning until he regains consciousness, for fear the god in him may be transmitted by contact.

778 A Nuer always considers the relatives of one who has been killed by lightning as sacred.

[826] [784] Any one who has some physical or mental deformity may be considered as having a god in him and be regarded as sacred and avoided for that reason.

781 The Nuer worship is a worship of fear. The missionary feels as if he were living in Old Testament times, and

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

776 791 755 they wanted to be sure that when *nai* and the other spirit had been satisfied there would be nothing further to prevent a speedy recovery. As for Rainen, if his manner of speech was that of a man out of his senses, its content showed reflection and purpose. What he, or the spirit in him, said was aimed at compelling Nhial to hand over his wages for the purchase from government herds of beasts for sacrifices, an object Rainen had been vainly trying to attain for some days previous to the ceremony. Rainen also justified himself, in what the spirit said, for the slaughter of a number of beasts to appease his various spirits, for which his family had criticized him for extravagance. They felt that too much of the family property was being devoted to religious purposes, whereas the spirit made it clear that, far from having made too many sacrifices, he had not made enough. Had he made more, Galuak would not have fallen sick. Religious and personal issues were interwoven in the spirit's declarations.

776 791 782 778 When the spirit had ceased speaking we left the hut, and Galuak's paternal uncle, Dol, went to chop down a branch of the 'wild date' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), a tree to which *nai* is said to be very partial, to erect it as a shrine (*riek*) to the spirit near the hut. When it had been erected a clump of *tuat* grass was dug up by the roots and planted at the side of the branch in a hole first filled with water, it being the dry season. A he-goat—by this time one had been procured—was then brought out and the prophet waved his spear, decorated with ostrich plumes, over its back and made a short invocation, telling the spirit that they were honouring it, saying that it would now cease to trouble Galuak, and asking God that the people might rest in peace. He then cut the goat's throat. It was later eaten by himself and his two friends. The people of the homestead did not partake of its flesh, but when it had been cooked some children were called from a nearby homestead and given pieces of the meat and told to run back to their home with them. The Nuer said of this: '*ca gat kwoth nang cieng*', 'the son of God is taken home'. Finally a *buor*, a mud mound in the shape of an ordinary kitchen windscreen, was erected near the shrine. On the following evening Rainen rubbed ashes on the back of a cow of his herd and dedicated it to the spirit of his father. By so doing he felt that he had appeased the second spirit which was troubling his son.

776 782 The relations between Nuer and their spirits centre in these

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

776 533 792 534 [778]

way as an animal is dedicated, while a short invocation is made. They are decorated with beads and metal rings. I was told that now and again, especially after dreams, a prophet rubs his spirit's drum with ashes, and sometimes also with butter, and asks God for peace and happiness. A prophet also builds a mud shrine, called *yik* or, if it is shaped like a windscreen, *buor*, to his spirit, the largest monument of the first kind being the pyramid of *deng* in the Lou tribal territory (p. 306).

IV

776

I now come to the most difficult, and the most important, part of this survey. How do Nuer conceive of these spirits in relation to God? I do not attempt yet to make a full analysis of the notion of *kwoth*, but only to discuss a limited part of it, the nature of the spirits of the air; though what is said about them has some bearing on the nature of other spirits and of Spirit in general. The matter is, for us, complex and confusing, and the conclusion I reached about it, that the spirits of the air are conceived of as both separate beings and yet also as different manifestations of God, may at first sight seem to hold a contradiction.

We may say to begin with that there is no question of Nuer regarding these spirits as beings of the same importance as *kwoth a nhial*. Whatever else they may be thought to be they are not thought of as beings independent of and equal to him. There is only one God. This is evident from a number of facts.

776 177

In the first place, it is shown by the way Nuer regard the beliefs of neighbouring peoples. It creates no problem for them when they find other peoples approaching God under different titles and in different ways from their own. Some Nuer, in spite of the general isolation of the Nuer and their lack of interest in other peoples, are aware that in religious matters neighbouring peoples differ to a greater or lesser degree from themselves. Some of them know something of Dinka religious beliefs and ceremonies, and a few of them are also aware, though Islam has made no impression on them, that Arab traders have their own form of worship and, though the influence of the Christian missions has been negligible,[1] that the Christian missionaries and their converts have

797

[1] In 1940, some years after I had concluded my research, there were 464 Nuer (250 Catholics and 214 Protestants), easily the lowest figure for

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

be its patron. I have noted that when a widow is killed by lightning at the home of a man with whom she cohabited after her husband's death her memorial is erected at her husband's home, though his people invite her lover to attend the commemoration ceremony. 776* 766

Lat, son of Pan, the master of ceremonies (pp. 287–9) of Nyakewa's father's family, made fire ritually with firesticks and from it were lighted the various fires on which pots were placed for boiling the beer. The mud supports for the pots were made on the spot, for one does not use old utensils on these occasions. Since the ceremony was for a woman a new mud windscreen was constructed. The master of ceremonies then erected a *riek*, a shrine-stake, in the centre of the funeral mound and planted at the side of the mound a sapling of the *nyuot* tree. Such a mound and stake are shown in Mr. Corfield's photograph in Plate II.[1] The *nyuot* tree is, as we have noted, associated with the spirit *col* and also with rain and with the sky from which rain and lightning come and to which the soul of the dead person has gone. When planted in the rains the sapling generally takes root. If it dies they plant another. Many of the trees one sees in Nuer villages have been planted in this manner. 776* 766 782 [778]

Shortly before sunset a procession of about twenty men arrived bearing in their hands leaves of the tobacco plant and heads of millet. They threw down these offerings near the mound with the freshly erected shrine-stake in the centre of it. No one comes to the place of sacrifice empty-handed. The procession was headed by the master of ceremonies leading a black ox, *a thak ma col*. It should preferably be a black one. This *ma col* sacrificial victim, *col* the spirit of lightning, and the colwic make a harmony of darkness (*col*), the darkness of storm. Before the ox was sacrificed men came from all directions leading oxen and castrated he-goats and wethers. The father of the dead girl's husband brought an ox, as did one of her maternal uncles. Among those who brought he-goats and wethers were the girl's mother, one of her maternal aunts, one of her maternal uncles, several of her father's kinsmen, and the man who had begotten her brother in adulterous congress

[1] This is almost certainly a colwic shrine, but it is more elaborate than most and the offerings of tobacco seen at the base would not be seen at shrines in other parts of Nuerland. The photograph was taken among the eastern Jikany Nuer who border the Anuak, great cultivators of tobacco.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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Shrine for person struck by lightning

[facing p. 58

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

those which had been killed immediately after Nyakewa had been struck by lightning. As the husband of one of Nyakewa's maternal aunts was killed at the same moment as herself while he was on a visit to her village many animals of the village had also to be sacrificed on his behalf in his own village. The flocks of the village were so depleted that there was no suitable beast available for sacrifice in a case of serious sickness which occurred in the village shortly afterwards (p. 35). The number of beasts sacrificed is an indication both of the seriousness of the event which occasioned the ceremony and of the wide circle of persons it affected.

When the sun was high in the heavens on this second day of the ceremony the beer was drunk, though it had not properly fermented. The old men poured some on the sacred stake while uttering a few words. I heard one of the maternal uncles say 'Nyakewa, we have no kinship with God. Thou hast kinship with him now. See, thy mother remains here; do not let the spirits trouble her.' Towards the end of the beer-drinking the people sang hymns to spirits of the air to the accompaniment of hand-clapping.

Later the waste products of the beer were heaped around the base of the stake on top of the tobacco leaves and millet heads and parts of the sacrificed beasts. The dead girl's ox-tassels, her horn spoon, her butter-gourd, and two lumps of tobacco were tied to the stake. These things were said to belong to God, for the girl's soul was now with God. They had become holy and could not be used by man. Finally the cooking stones and pots used in the beer-making were neatly arranged around the heap of offerings. I was told afterwards: 'Nyakewa has altogether departed from us who are men and has become Spirit (*kwoth*). Henceforward we will invoke her name in battle as we brandish our spears.' About a year after this ceremony kinsmen gather again at the shrine to drink beer and to sprinkle (*kith*) some of it into the air as an offering.

Sometimes a *colwic* spirit seizes a member of its family or lineage, in the same way as a spirit of the air may seize a man, and makes him sick. When he recovers he makes a small mound-shrine (*yiŋ*) in his homestead and this then takes the place of the original shrine at the home of the person killed by lightning. Some of the dead person's ornaments may be inserted into the mound of the new shrine and others hung on the stake erected in it and on the low fence enclosing it.

people be at peace. They complete the rite by building a small mound of ashes as a shrine (*yiɛ*) to the spirit. I have seen goats with what the Nuer call *ma nyal*, python-like, markings dedicated to the python-spirit in kraals. A Lou tribesman told me that when he was a boy a python entered his father's kraal and paid particular attention to a goat dedicated to its spirit, and his father gave it milk in a gourd and rubbed its scales with butter. All Nuer say that if any snake enters the homestead of a man who respects that species he will offer it milk and rub its scales with butter, but I have not seen this done. They say that a snake which has been treated with these courtesies may enter the byre and sleep there and, when it wakes, crawl among the cattle in the kraal, paying friendly attention to the cow or beast of the flock dedicated to its spirit. A man who respects pythons respects also bees, because Nuer consider their markings to be like those of the python, and will not kill them or eat their honey.

Another snake respected by a large number of small lineages of Dinka descent is *lualdit* or *vir*, which I believe to be the tree cobra. A Nuer of the Leek tribe told me how this totem had come into his family, and his story has some interest in that it illustrates the way in which a lineage may acquire a totem. His father was digging a hole in which to plant a support to a new cattle byre when he scooped up a cobra with the earth in his hands. In his fright he killed it with a digging-stick. Later he fell sick and the form of a cobra appeared to him in a dream and told him that it wanted a *duor*, a gift, so he sacrificed an ox to the cobra-spirit and dedicated a cow to it. His sons now respect the cobra, and their descendants may continue to do so. During my first expedition to Nuerland one of my Zande servants was chased into my tent by one of these cobras and I was forced to shoot it. Later in the day a man of the cattle camp where I was residing came to complain that I had killed his *kwoth*, totem, when I might easily have sent to ask him to remove it from my tent. He demanded compensation, which I made with a lump of tobacco. Some people say that if you can kill a cobra without it seeing you, you will find *wal*, medicine, inside it. If it sees you it will spit out the medicine before you can kill it. Those who respect the cobra respect also the little red soldier ants, here again apparently on account of a resemblance of colour.[1] When bitten by them they do not slap them on their

[1] Dr. Lienhardt tells me that a beast dedicated to the spirit of cobra should

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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for totem must not do so lest he cause the birds to devour the crop.

Plants are respected by some lineages. They may not cut them or burn their wood. The large Gaanwar clan respect the *nyuot*-tree (*Cordia Rothii*) and the *kost*, tamarind, tree. The ancestor of this clan fell from heaven holding a branch of the *nyuot*-tree in his hand or, some say, he descended from heaven by, or on to, a *nyuot* near which was a small tamarind.[1] Members of this clan call for aid on *kwoth nyots* or *kwoth kots*, the spirit of these trees. The *nyuot*, a branch of which is often erected in the homes of Gaanwar as a shrine to this spirit, is associated with rain on account of the humidity of its leaves even in the dry season. The verbal form of the word, *nyot*, means 'to drizzle'. Members of the clan may therefore be called on to bring rain in time of drought. This they do by placing a sprig of the tree in water, sacrificing an animal, and calling on the spirit of the clan, which is the spirit of the tree, for rain. It is, we may suppose, on account of their connexion with water that the clan have as additional totems the waterbuck and the fish *nyiwar*, *cur*, *lam*, *yiau*, and *gwejual* and can also speak of their spirit as '*kwoth pwoora*', 'spirit of our waterbuck', '*kwoth lameda*', 'spirit of our *lam* fish', and so on. I have been told that women of this clan will not eat the meat of a cow which has died calving, but I do not know the reason for this abstention. The scattered Jwal clan share some of the Gaanwar totems. They seem at one time to have formed a single clan with the Gaanwar. The Jingop and Keunyang lineages of western Nuerland respect the *ngop* tree, the sycamore or wild fig (*Ficus Sycomorus*), and speak of '*kwoth ngoapna*', 'spirit of our fig-tree', to which they dedicate cows in their kraals, as is usual where there is a totemic relationship. The largest clan in Nuerland, the Gaatgankir of the Jikany tribes, respect gourds. Their ancestor was found in a gourd (*kir*). They will not cut or step over the stems of gourds or prepare them to serve as utensils, for they must not handle a gourd which still contains its pulp and seed. Nevertheless they use them as utensils for the same purposes as do other Nuer. The clan is of Dinka origin, though it now counts as a Nuer clan. Other plants respected by lineages, usually of Dinka descent,

[1] Some variants of the story of his appearance on earth are recorded in *The Nuer*, p. 130.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

sprite in the manner I have described when speaking of the spirits of the air. He must then give the man from whom he purchased the sprite some cattle to get him to invoke it, asking it to assist the purchaser and not to harm his family, for spirits of this kind are regarded as dangerous for the families of their possessors. They may protect their owners and bring them good fortune, but they are also liable to turn on members of their families and kin if they are not frequently offered gifts. The new owner now hangs the meteorite in a gourd in his hut and hangs also near it offerings of butter, ashes, and tobacco in other gourds.

Similar sprites are the *bieli yier*, river-sprites. They are found, under the name *biel roa*, hippopotamus-sprite, in some hippopotamuses, and also in certain fish, *rec car*, *ludh* (lung-fish), *lek*, and *ril*.[1] Nuer declare that '*cike mat*', 'they have congregated', in certain hippopotamuses. It is said that if a man kills one of these animals he will see a light on its head, and that afterwards the sprite will seize him. He breaks the skull of the animal with an axe and takes out the brains and boils them, rubs a little of the boiled brains on his forehead and right arm, and eats the rest of them. Shortly afterwards he falls sick, and if his surmise that it is the sprite which has made him sick is confirmed by a prophet, or by a possessor of this or another kind of sprite, a hand-clapping and hymn-singing ceremony is held, in the course of which the sick man becomes dissociated and the sprite speaks through his lips, saying what it is and what it wants. A sacrifice is then made and the bones and chyme of the victim are placed near the entrance to the man's hut and a mound of ashes is piled over them, forming a shrine (*yiŋ bila*), into the top of which a branch of the *nyuot*-tree is stuck. The sprite then leaves the man, but he continues to pay it attention from time to time, dedicating an animal to it and making it offerings, and his children may continue to do so after his death. Other *bieli* are the *biel jiath*, tree-sprite, *biel roal*, termite mound-sprite, and what is sometimes called *kwoth jiaiwi*, spirit of grasses, which manifests itself in a will-o'-the-wisp coming from rotting swamp vegetation and is perhaps the same as *kwoth doar*, spirit of the bush. Dr. Howell speaks also of a *biel rir*, cobra-sprite, and a *biel loi*, cattle peg-sprite, connected with

[1] For identifications of some of the fish mentioned in this chapter see Sabet Giegis, 'A List of Common Fish of the Upper Nile with their Shilluk, Dinka, and Nuer Names', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1948, pp. 121–5.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

the fertility of cows.[1] These various sprites seem to have much the same character as that of the meteorite-sprite and to be treated in a similar way.

A collection of hymns sung to nature sprites might tell us much more than I have recorded about them, but I took down only one specimen,[2] which begins:

> *Biel*, you love a cow in the heavens,
> Son of the master of *deng*, you love a cow in the heavens,
> Say if you want a brown cow,
> Say if you want a white cow,
> The cow of *biel deang* is a cow which will calve.

I quote these lines because, whatever their precise meaning may be, if they have one, they bear the unmistakable imprint of Dinka influence and therefore support the conclusion I reached on other grounds, mainly on the fact that these sprites are little heard of in eastern Nuerland, that the *bieli* have been taken over by the Nuer from their Dinka neighbours. The sprite is represented as the son of the Dinka spirit *deng* and the word I have translated, following Dr. Lienhardt's usage, 'master' in the second line is *bany*, which must in this context be a Dinka word.

Likewise, and even more surely, the fetishes, with which the *bieli* are sometimes classed, may be considered to be of foreign origin and to have been introduced fairly recently into Nuerland. At the time I was living there they were rarely found among the most easterly tribes and those who possessed them there had journeyed to the west of the Nile to purchase them. All Nuer whom I consulted were unanimous that the fetishes are foreign and new, those of the Lou tribe saying that they first began to hear of them in the time of the initiation period of the Dangunga age-set, roughly some 50 years ago. The Nuer got them from the Dinka, but it is highly probable that the Dinka first got them from the Sudanic so-called Jur peoples (*Beli, Sofi, Gberi, Mittu*, and *Lori*).[3] The Nuer have tried, not entirely successfully, to assimilate

[1] P. P. Howell, 'Some Observations on "Earthly Spirits" among the Nuer', *Man*, 1953.

[2] Others have been recorded by Father Crazzolara, op. cit., p. 146, and Dr. Howell, ibid.

[3] The conclusion that they come from the Jur is based partly on what Nuer say and partly on a number of ethnological considerations arising out of my earlier research—much still unpublished—among the Jur and neighbouring peoples. It gains support from a note by Capt. V. H. Fergusson ("Mattiang Gok"

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these Sudanic medicines, which represent something quite alien to their traditional way of thinking, to their conception of Spirit.

The Nuer word for what I have called fetishes is *kulangni*, and they often use this plural form even when they are speaking of a particular fetish. They are what the Nuer call *wal*, a word which means in its widest sense 'plants' but in a special sense, as here, what are usually spoken of as 'medicines' in writings on African peoples—magical substances. The fetishes are so called because they are pieces of wood, though Nuer distinguish them from ordinary magical substances by calling them 'medicines which talk'. By this they mean that the spirits in them talk, because, here again, Nuer can conceive of the spirits as separate from the material substances in which they have their abode.[1] What has been said earlier about air-spirits and totemic spirits must be said also about nature sprites and fetishes. The same spirit is in a number of different luminescences or bundles of wood.

Like the nature sprites these fetishes bear some resemblance, especially in the manner by which men communicate with them, to the spirits of the air. Nuer have tried to assimilate them to an earlier model of Spirit, and this is indicated metaphorically by calling both types of spirits *gaatnyadeang*, children of daughter(s) of *deng*, a Nuer way of saying both that they are Dinka and that they are spirits of a very inferior order. There are quite a number of fetishes: *mathiang, ngo, macar, darguk, mabor, malual, maluil, maluth, gouciew*, and others.[2] The names of several of those I have mentioned are colour-names: the white one, the black one, the brown one, &c.

Fetishes are amoral in their action. They are acquired in the first instance by purchase, though they may later be inherited,

'Witchcraft', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1913, pp. 110–14) in which he says that an Agar Dinka first got this kind of medicine from the Jur about the year 1900. Writing in 1913 he says 'To-day it is universally used throughout the entire Eastern and Rumbek District and many Dinka are enriching themselves by introducing it into the Nuer Country.'

[1] Capt. Ferguson (*ibid.*, p. 111) also notes that the substance is 'merely a visible sign' of Spirit.

[2] Father Crazzolara (*op. cit.*, p. 136) divides them into the *kulang* type, which speak through men, and the *gak* type, chthonic beings which speak from the earth. Dr. Howell (*op. cit.*) makes the same division, though he would agree with me that '*kulangni*' can be, and commonly is, used to cover both. I am ready to accept a formal division into these two types but I cannot agree with Dr. Howell's opinion that the *kulang* type is of Nuer, and the *gak* type of Dinka, origin. I am fully convinced that both are of foreign origin.

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for private ends and personal aggrandizement. They are highly dangerous, not only to those who are at enmity with their owners, but also to their owners' families, kin, and neighbours if they do not receive sufficient attention. When they seize people death follows rapidly on the first symptoms, which are said to be generally violent pains in the abdomen sometimes combined with blood in the faeces, unless steps are at once taken to appease them and, in the case of enemies, their owners also. Therefore a *guan kulangni*, an owner of a fetish, whom I shall speak of as a wizard,[1] is much feared by those with whom he disputes and by those around him. Some wizards ape prophets by growing little beards and they sometimes thread beads on the hairs and can be identified by this mark.

I have only known one of these wizards, a man called Bul in Leu tribal country. I was living in his village, Kurmayom on the Sobat river, when he returned home with a fetish he had acquired on a visit to western Nuerland, it was said from the Jur people. The whole village was in a state of alarm, so much so that, finding my previously friendly relations with the villagers severed, I thought it best to leave it. A goat was sacrificed on his arrival and I was told that offerings of porridge, milk, and tobacco would have been placed on the ground near the fetish, which is said to 'eat' (*cam*) the 'souls' of these things (*riethdiew*), its owner later consuming their substance. Though everyone was nervous and anxious about what might happen, I was told on this and on other occasions that a man who has acquired a fetish may be welcomed in his village, its people feeling that, if it is placated, it may be a protection for them and a useful weapon against outsiders, and one hears men of the village speaking of '*waidaw*', 'our fetish'; but none the less my impression was that they would much rather be without it.

A wizard uses his fetish to avenge what he regards as injuries (others may not regard them as such), to obtain cattle which he considers to be owing to him (others may not think so), and in general to make himself a person of importance. Nuer told me that European administration has made it easier for men to acquire and exercise these powers. They said that when fetishes

[1] They have a resemblance to the *ba'al ob*, 'wizards that peep and mutter', of the Old Testament, the *ob* being a familiar spirit which seemed to speak either from beneath the ground or out of the stomach of the diviner, and to the Greek *ventriloquus* (W. Robertson Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, 1895 ed., pp. 100 and 401).

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first appeared in Nuerland their owners ran the risk of being killed by avengers if it was thought that they had been responsible for people's deaths, and that therefore a man belonging to a numerically weak community would not own a fetish. It is sometimes known that a wizard has caused a man's death by his falling sick after a dispute with him. If, however, a man falls sick and only suspects that his sickness may be due to a fetish he confirms whether this is so by getting a diviner to reveal the cause, or he may summon a friendly wizard to determine it, and if it prove to be a fetish, which fetish. I have not seen this operation but I was told that the friendly wizard shakes a gourd-rattle while the people rock their bodies, clap their hands, and sing hymns to the fetish till the sick man enters into a dissociated state. The wizard then questions the spirit in the sick man and it reveals to him its name. The wizard also questions his own fetish-spirit, which is in the rattle during the seance and answers by grunts his questions about the sickness, such as what sacrifice is required and whether the patient will recover if it is made. The sickness may be caused by the fetish of a kinsman which wants attention, or it may be due to some wizard having pointed his *wal* in the sick man's direction to kill him. If the name of a fetish is not revealed by these procedures it is thought that the sickness must be due to some other cause and not to a fetish at all. If the responsible agent is found to be the fetish of a kinsman the sick man's family placate it by dedicating a beast to it and by sacrificing to it—'they send them (the *kulongwei*) back (to where they came from) with a "cow"'. A little of the boiled meat of the sacrifice is minced and thrown as an offering to the spirit to the four points of the compass. The rest is divided between the wizard and the people of the home. If it is the fetish of an enemy, sacrifice is made, I believe to the fetish of the wizard who has conducted the seance, and afterwards he goes to the enemy wizard and asks him to desist. I was told that the enemy wizard may either deny responsibility or give some reason why he has pointed his fetish at the man who has fallen sick and promise that he will call it off if his wrong is set right. If should his victim die he must sacrifice a sheep or a goat, a rite known as *laka wangkiew*, the washing of their (the fetish's) eye, and said to be equivalent to the rite of incising the arm of a homicide.

When a wizard dies his fetish is likely to be put aside, but if so,

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it is expected that before long the spirit will seize a member of his family or kin, causing him sickness, and announce through his lips that it is offended at neglect. They then give it offerings of food and tobacco; and when the sick man has recovered he respects (*thek*) the fetish, as its previous owner did when he possessed it, and makes it offerings from time to time. Or a son, brother, or wife may just take over the dead man's fetish without it first causing sickness, but they are not likely to do this if they are young. Young people prefer to be free from such ambiguous encumbrances.

What I have recorded about these fetishes is no more than hearsay. It is possible, nevertheless, to reach some general conclusions about them and about the Nuer attitude towards them. It is easy to observe that Nuer feelings in the matter are either hostile or ambivalent. They fear and dislike the fetishes and are afraid even of those of their kin, perhaps most afraid of those; and they seem to be confused and bewildered about the whole question of fetishes. This is understandable in that here is something that has entered into Nuerland with the reputation of being mobile and of having lethal powers, attributes which the Nuer can only think of in terms of their own culture as spirit in some form or other, and yet it is used for private ends that they regard with disfavour sufficient to consider that homicide caused by it requires vengeance. Those men with whom I was best acquainted among the eastern Nuer spoke harshly against these fetishes and would gladly have seen the end of them. I do not myself know the circumstances in western Nuerland, but Father Crazzolara says that there is much hostility to them there also, and also great confusion concerning them, for new fetishes frequently appear, they become well known in one district and are unknown in others, and they wax and wane in popularity.[1] We would doubtless be right in seeking for an explanation of the anxiety Nuer express lest their fetishes may turn on themselves and of their emphasis on the almost insatiable greed of fetishes for offerings, which are moreover of the lowest kind (such as porridge) and presented to them in the most materialistic way, in their perception that spiritual powers are being used for selfish ends. It would not be going beyond Nuer feelings on the matter to speak of their fetishes as evil spirits.

[1] Op. cit., pp. 133 sqq.

778 Indeed, the fetishes seem only to have been placed in the category of Spirit by the logical necessity of assimilating the powers attributed to them to some model the Nuer already possessed. They are also of the category of *wal*, medicines, which sharply differentiates them from Spirit proper, but since they can reveal their wants and wishes in speech, move about, and kill people, they seem to Nuer to fall between the two categories. It is to be remarked that the *kulangni* and the *bieli*, which are closer to totemic representations of Spirit, are generally referred to by these names and not, like the totemic spirits, as *kuth*, as though by distinction of name they were being marked off from the other spirits. It should be stressed also, in this connexion, that the fetishes, and to some extent the nature sprites, are spoken of in the plural, as when we speak of angels, devils, goblins, and fairies, showing that they are conceived of as having less individuality than other spirits.

776

759 It remains only to say a few words about medicines which do not talk, the ordinary *wal*, magical substances which have an efficacy in themselves and do not derive their power from Spirit. Coming to the Nuer from Zandeland, where everyone is a magician and medicines are legion and in daily use, I was at once struck by their negligible quantity and importance in Nuerland, and further experience confirmed my first impression. I mention them chiefly for the reason that their rarity and unimportance are highly indicative of the orientation of Nuer thought, which is always towards Spirit.

789 In speaking of Nuer magic we are faced with the same historical problem that I have mentioned earlier, for all Nuer with whom I have spoken on the subject have said that medicines were almost entirely lacking—only a few are thought to be old—in the days of their fathers and that most of the few medicines they now possess have been taken over from neighbouring peoples. My own view is that ethnological evidences support their statements, but the point that is important for us here is rather that Nuer regard medicines as something foreign and strange. They think easily in terms of Spirit but not in terms of medicines, the idea of which as it obtains among their Sudanic neighbours they seem scarcely able to grasp.

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789 Nuer medicines of today are mostly of the nature of talismans
755 for fortune—in hunting, fishing, courting, and travelling. I did not find that Nuer had much faith in them. Medicines are also

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776 782 Moreover, though God is God of all men he is not only conceived of, in the various totemic and other representations we have considered, as the special patron of descent, and sometimes of local, groups, but each family regards him, without specific differentiation of title, as having a particular relation to itself; and he may be spoken about in terms of a particular household, hamlet, or village community. One hears Nuer say in invocations, as in the one I have just recorded, 'God who is in this village', or 'God who is in this home'. When a Nuer builds a byre he holds a small ceremony before its central support is erected. Beer is prepared, and before the people drink it the master of ceremonies or the owner of the byre pours a libation of it to God and the ghosts at the entrance to the byre and in the centre of it, where the hearth and shrine will be, and asks God to give peace and prosperity to the home, its people and its cattle. They think then of God looking after their home in a special way, of being particularly attached to it so that he then becomes, as it were, in a special sense the family's God, a household God. The shrine, a forked post, is the [777] altar of God within the home, God of the hearth, as well as being associated with any of his particular representations—totemic, colour, air-spirits, &c.—in which he may stand in a tutelary relationship to the lineage or family of the owner of the homestead, and also with the ancestral ghosts. He is spoken of in this domestic representation as *kwoth rieka*, God of the post (shrine). Further, every member of a Nuer lineage, whether or not it has totemic or other specifically designated spirits, will in invocations speak of '*kwoth gwara*', 'spirit of our fathers', or in reference to the name of the ancestor of the lineage or clan, just as the Old Testament speaks of 'the God of our fathers' or 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'. Similarly one hears the leopard-skin priests address God as '*kwoth Geaka*', 'spirit of Gee'. Gee was the first leopard-skin priest from whom all the leopard-skin priests derive their powers, so that the expression refers to God figured as patron of priests; though it also has a wider, national, sense, for Gee was also the ancestor of the most important Nuer clans.

776 Apart from the use of names or titles as diacritical signs to indicate an inclusive or exclusive relationship to God, Nuer make the same distinction grammatically through their inclusive or exclusive pronominal suffixes. These particles are rather complicated when they are attached to family and kinship terms, as in

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PLATE V

●778

Windscreen

[facing p132]

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problem we have been considering has changed its form and, at least on first consideration, seems to elude, if not altogether to escape, us. For us the light is a gas arising from swamp vegetation, so that the statement that it *is* Spirit is of the same kind as the statement that a crocodile is Spirit; and whatever meaning might be attached to the one would be the same for the other. But we cannot say that they are statements of the same kind for Nuer. For them, whereas the crocodile is a thing conceived of separately from spirit, even though in a certain sense and for certain people it may be said to be Spirit, the phosphorescence is a descent of Spirit in the form of light on to something which is not in any way said to be Spirit, such as a hippopotamus, and on which it may appear at certain times and places and not at other times and places. So we are no longer asking what sense it has for Nuer when one of them says of a thing, which is not for them in itself Spirit, that it is Spirit. We are asking what sense it has for them when one of them says of a thing which has no meaning for them other than an emanation of Spirit that it is Spirit. In the case of the crocodile what is perceived is the reptile, and in certain circumstances it may be conceived of as Spirit for certain persons. In the case of the *bieli* what is perceived may indeed be said to be just light but it can only be conceived of as Spirit, for it has no other name which differentiates it from any other sort of light or fire than *bieli*. When, regarding such a light, Nuer say 'it is Spirit' they are no longer saying that something is something else but are merely giving a name to what is observed; so that here 'it is Spirit' belongs to the same class of statements as 'it is a crocodile', and it might be held that the question we have been examining does not properly arise. Nevertheless, this is not entirely the case, as I will explain later.

What has been said of the lights of the nature spirites can be said also of the little bundles of wood in which the *kulangni*, the fetish spirits, have their abode, but for a different reason. A bundle of wood in which a fetish spirit has its abode is not a symbol of spirit, as a crocodile may be. Nor is it, like the *bieli*, a visible appearance of Spirit. It is a thing where a particular spirit abides. Nevertheless, it must be difficult for a fetish-owner to regard the bundle as being just anything which serves as a lodging for the spirit. It is before the bundle that he makes his offerings and it is the bundle he points at an enemy he wishes the spirit to harm.

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Moreover, the bundles are fashioned solely as habitations for spirits and have no significance other than is derived from this purpose and use. Hence when Nuer say of a fetish-bundle that it is Spirit they are not saying that something which also has for them a separate meaning as something in itself, which is other than Spirit, is something else, namely Spirit, but that something which has no meaning of any kind outside its being an abode and a material sign of Spirit is Spirit. So the fetish-bundles cannot easily be thought of, as can rain or crocodile, either in terms of Spirit or in terms of their purely material natures, but only in terms of Spirit.

But though in the case of both the lights and the bundles there seems to be a more complete and fixed fusion between things and Spirit than in the case of the totems, the problem of something being something else is still present, though in a more complex, and also a more obscure and roundabout, form. Here again, although it can be said of a light in the bush or of a fetish-bundle that it is Spirit, the statement cannot be reversed. It cannot be said of Spirit that it is the light or the bundle, for that would mean to Nuer that Spirit in its oneness, conceived of as God, is entirely in the light or the bundle, which would make no sense to them. In the statement that the light or bundle is Spirit what, therefore, has to be understood by Spirit is a refraction of Spirit, or a spirit. But, even so, the 'is' is not one of identity, for though a phosphorescent light is a nature sprite exhibiting itself and is not conceived of as anything else, the nature sprite may be thought of independently of the light; and though the fetish-bundle may be a meaningless object except in relation to the fetish-spirit which occupies it, the spirit which occupies it can be thought of independently of it. When the light is no longer visible the *biel* sprite is none the less present for certain people as their sprite, which is Spirit in relation to them as an idea quite apart from its sporadic appearances as a light. A fetish-spirit takes its abode in a fetish-bundle of wood and it may leave it; and it is also present for certain people as Spirit in relation to them as an idea quite apart from its material home. In either case the spirits are thought to come, or at some time to have come, from above to earth and to be independent, as Spirit, of any material forms. Consequently the same nature sprite or fetish-spirit can be in different lights or in different bundles at the same time, just as an air-spirit can be in different prophets at

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PLATE VI

Rich shrine

[facing p. 152]

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further that when the tusks are removed they are first buried under the floor of a cattle byre before being cut up for distribution among such persons as have rights in them, and that when they are buried a sacrifice, called *kurpiny*, is made, the name of the sacrifice being the same as that made when a man is buried.[1]

The only occasions on which I have heard Nuer speak of creatures, other than cattle, or things having a *tie* was when they were discussing offerings of food and tobacco to fetishes, and in this case the usage was clearly metaphorical just as was their use of the word *cam*, to eat, in the same connexion. *Cam* is often used in a metaphorical sense to indicate that something is being appropriated, as when it is said of a man, usually a man with the evil eye or someone connected with the Government, that '*came nath*', 'he eats the people', that is, he takes something from, or exploits, the people. Nuer know very well that a fetish does not really eat the offerings. They only suppose that it in some way appropriates them, and since the offerings are obviously not materially appropriated they are more or less obliged to use the only available analogy and to speak of the fetish taking their 'souls'. Nuer do not attribute souls to food and tobacco, or to any other things. They are merely using the word in an attempt to explain their use in a very special and peculiar situation.

I have discussed this question partly because it was necessary to do so to make clear that in Nuer thought the soul is something essentially human which man has in addition to life, which he shares with other creatures, and partly because it is of some theoretical importance. In the light of the discussion it will be seen that the so-called animistic theory of religion, chiefly associated with the name of Tylor, cannot be sustained for the Nuer; since they are not animists and there is no evidence that they ever have been. But there is a further and more decisive reason for rejecting it. It supposes that the conception of Spirit derives and has developed from that of the soul, whereas in Nuer thought *kwoth*, Spirit, is something of quite a different nature from *tie*, soul. The soul is part of man and a created thing. Spirit is extrinsic to man, operating on him from outside him, and invasive. Nuer express the difference in nature between the human and the divine, between soul, or ghost, and Spirit when they say that 'God

[1] P. P. Howell, 'A Note on Elephants and Elephant Hunting among the Nuer', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1945, p. 100.

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775 of the departed. On such occasions Nuer usually have a definite
782 ghost in mind, but in contexts in which the lineage as a whole is involved they may speak of *jook dial*, all the ghosts (of their lineage), though I have seldom heard them do so; and the reason for this is that when, on ceremonial occasions, Nuer speak of a lineage as a collectivity to which both dead and living belong they speak in terms of Spirit rather than of ghosts, of '*kwoth* which created our ancestor', rather than of the ancestor himself, and of '*kwoth* of our fathers', rather than the fathers themselves. The conception of the ghosts is subordinated to that of Spirit.

775 Nuer do not pray (*pal*) to the ghosts, which have no power in
782 themselves to grant requests. On such occasions as I have men-
776 tioned they may invoke (*law*) them, but even when they do this the ghosts take second place to God in some such phrases as '*kwoth, yene jook*', 'God, thou and the ghosts'. Even when beasts are reserved for them, Nuer do not formally dedicate them to the ghosts as they do to their spirits, and though they sacrifice on certain occasions on their behalf or in their honour or memory, I do not think that it can be said that sacrifice is ever made to them, at any rate not to them by themselves, for it may be that in those sacrifices in which God and the ghosts are invoked together Nuer think of the sacrifice being to both. Even if this is so, the victim is consecrated to God and not to the ghosts. Likewise,
• [778] though the ghosts are associated with the *riek* or post-shrine which elderly men erect in their homes, it is a shrine firstly to God as God of the hearth and in whatever further refractions he may be figured as the guardian of the family and lineage. It is therefore called *riek kwoth*, God's shrine, and not *riek jookni*, ghosts' shrine. There is no cult of the dead, and their graves, not being
[769] marked, are soon forgotten unless a tree happens to spring from the tomb, when it may be named after the man buried there. A man's memorial is not in some monument but in his sons.

768 Dead persons, though for the most part only men, are remem-
613 bered in their names, and this is a matter of great importance
551 both for the Nuer themselves and also for an understanding on our part of their sentiments. Every man likes to feel that his name will never be forgotten so long as his lineage endures and that in that sense he will always be a part of the lineage. Consequently, Nuer do not so much think of the ghosts of their forebears as being those members of their lineage who are in the home of the dead.

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782 scattered in the drought. There is also plenty of beer and porridge
574 in the rains to add to the meat of the sacrifices for feasting, and little or none in the dry-season camps, for even if their millet is not exhausted people are often too far from their granaries to transport it. Moreover, the social activities which are the occasion of collective sacrifices take place, largely because there is plenty of food, in the rains. I think also it is possible that there is more, and more serious, sickness in the rains and hence the greater need for sacrifices then.

782 It does not seem usually to matter at what time of day a sacrifice takes place, though the early morning is preferred on big occasions when oxen are sacrificed; but I have witnessed sacrifices when the sun was high and also in the evening. Early morning and evening are the most convenient times because then the men are at leisure and it is cool, but the early morning has the additional advantage that it gives time for what are sometimes lengthy ceremonies to be performed with slow dignity. I suppose that if there were need Nuer would sacrifice at night, but I have never known this happen, and it would cause certain inconveniences.

There is no particular spot at which the rites must be performed. The ceremony may be held in the space in front of the dwelling-huts if it is on a domestic scale. This is a suitable place for sacrifice, • [778] for a man often erects there a *riek*, post-shrine, and there also is the wife's *buor*, mud wind-screen (Plate V), which also has a certain sacred significance, being the woman's counterpart to the *riek*, as well as serving its practical purpose. But in major sacrifices of the collective type, when there may be many persons present, the sacrifices are likely to be held in the kraal, where there may also be a *riek* (Plate VI), or at its edge, on account of the cattle, or even if they are absent, to avoid the tethering-pegs incommoding those making the invocations. It is not, however, a matter of importance and anywhere convenient will do—properly speaking Nuer have no fanes.[1] It is the same for place as for time. They do not worry about such details. God is at all times and everywhere; there are no specially sacred times and places for sacrifice. Likewise, there are no specially sacred persons who must make sacrifice: any man

[1] God, spirits, and ghosts are associated with the *riek*, which may be in the courtyard, in the kraal, or at the side of the gol, the central hearth in the byre, which is the symbol of the family conceived of as a group of agnates and kinsmen of the lineage; and for women, with the *buor*, the symbol of the elementary family, the domestic group.

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792 expression of the prophet's relation to Spirit, the spirit in him lifting him up, as it were, to its own realm.

792 The construction of this so-called pyramid (*bie*), a conspicuous
778 landmark in Lou tribal territory, was begun by Ngundeng and completed by Gwek. It was a huge mound of earth and debris some fifty to sixty feet high with a base diameter of about a hundred feet. It was surmounted by elephant tusks and a spear decorated with an ostrich egg and feathers and encircled at the base with dozens of elephant tusks, numbers of which were also buried in the mound.[1] The purpose of the mound seems to have been to honour *deng* and increase the prestige of his prophet, though it may have expressed also the feeling of the above quality of Spirit. It became a cult centre, people from the whole of eastern Nuerland, and even from the west of the Nile, bringing cattle there for sacrifice; and Ngundeng and Gwek kept in a kraal near by a herd of cattle with black and white markings (*riai*) dedicated to *bungdit*, the mother of *deng*, with whom these markings are
[177] associated. All this is more in accordance with Dinka than Nuer thought and custom, and there is some reason to suppose that the idea of the mound was, like the *deng* conception itself, borrowed from the Dinka. There is said to be a similar, though smaller, mound at Thuc, in eastern Gaajak country, built by a prophet called Deng, son of Dul. Ngundeng's mound was blown up with high explosive by the British administration during a punitive expedition in 1928 against his son's followers. However, much of it still remains, and Dr. Lienhardt tells me that it is said at the present time that sometimes at night a strange light is seen shining from it; and when a recent eclipse of the sun occurred people said
792 that Ngundeng was returning. Another prophet, Deng Leuka, a
785 prophet of the spirit *dit*, a Dinka of the Gaawar tribe, also acquired his spirit by fasting and solitude. He left his home and wandered in the bush where for many days he sat under a tree without eating. When found he was engaged in collecting hundreds of shells of the giant land snail and arranging them in rows. This abnormal side to the prophets is to be seen in their unkempt hair and their beards, both of which are objectionable to ordinary

[1] Captain H. H. Wilson in *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, edited by Count Gleichen, 1905, vol. i, p. 140; information from Major C. H. Stigand, *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1918, p. 100; H. C. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 158; P. Coriat, *op. cit.*, p. 104.